



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
UNGA 75 – Sixth Committee

Agenda item 114 – Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Mr. Chair,

Terrorism violates human dignity and fundamental human rights and, by targeting civilians, it also threatens international security and sustainable development. The terrorists' utter disdain for life and fundamental freedoms, their unspeakable crimes against women and children, and the savage barbarity of their acts of destruction call for absolute condemnation. No ideological, political, philosophical, racial, ethnic, or religious reasons can ever justify or excuse terrorism.

Precisely because of the evil of terrorism, our common efforts to prevent and contrast terrorist attacks must abide by the highest standards. Anti-terrorism measures “cannot justify a renunciation of the principles of the rule of law,”¹ and they would be “unacceptable were they to seek success without consideration for fundamental human rights, since the end never justifies the means.”²

It is essential therefore that all measures to combat and eliminate international terrorism be characterized by respect for the rule of law – including just process, human rights and fundamental freedoms – and the scrupulous adherence to international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

It is especially problematic when anti-terrorism measures become hindrances to legitimate humanitarian aid. While the concern that aid not fall into the hands of terrorists themselves is indeed legitimate, those measures should not become yet another heavy burden for the civilian population. The same populations that suffer from terrorism and that see

¹ John Paul II, Message for the 2004 World Day of Peace, 8

² John Paul II, Message for the 2004 World Day of Peace, 8.

their young ensnared by an ideology of death and destruction quite often also suffer the loss of desperately needed assistance.

Since the problem of terrorism transcends national and regional bodies, multilateral cooperation is essential, and the four pillars of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) remain valid and relevant. The numerous international legal instruments relating to the prevention and suppression of international terrorism, both global and regional, underline the commitment of all the members of the international community to work together.³ My Delegation congratulates the organizers of the Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week in July for having kept this topic at the forefront of international discussion despite the current pandemic. The increased attention given to cyberterrorism and the misuse of digital technology by terrorists is also a most welcome development.

Violence and extremism are often driven by economic, political and socio-cultural factors, which foment the grievances of marginalized groups. Greater attention must thus be given to the remedies for the root causes of terrorism, such as educating youth, not marginalizing individuals or groups, resolving severe economic disparity, promoting dialogue and respect for diversity and inclusiveness. Counter-terrorism efforts must involve local communities, local governments and grassroots organizations since they provide a cultural milieu that prevents the youth from being radicalized.

Greater efforts are also needed to foster tolerance and inclusivity towards minorities through a robust promotion of the right to freedom of conscience, religion and belief, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In fact, failure to respect those freedoms may nurture an environment prone to violence and extremism. It is therefore indispensable to promote a positive and respectful distinction between the political sphere and that of religion, so as to preserve both the religious freedom of all persons and the irreplaceable role of religion in the formation of consciences and the creation of a basic ethical consensus in society.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.
